

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**IN RE: PASCOAG UTILITY DISTRICT :
2020 DEMAND SIDE MANAGEMENT : DOCKET NO. 4991
PROGRAM :**

ORDER

On July 1, 2020, Pascoag Utility District (Pascoag) filed a request to adjust certain rebates approved in its 2020 Demand Side Management Program (Program). The Program budget was approved by the Commission on December 17, 2019. Specifically, Pascoag proposed increasing the weatherization and air sealing rebate percentage from 75% to 100% and raising the maximum rebate caps from \$800 for insulation and \$500 for air sealing to a combined total of \$3,000 per customer in its Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program. It also requested approval to reallocate \$8,765 from its Community Events program and \$2,500 from the Energy Efficiency Management Continuing Education program to the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program should those program funds be depleted.¹

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pascoag has had to cancel community events and close its offices to the public for a period. To keep customers informed of its Home Energy Audit with Weatherization Incentives program, Pascoag began advertising on Facebook, its online portal and with a community news site. It also sent letters to its past due customers informing them of the program and the Energy Star rebates it offers. However, these methods of advertising have had little success. Pascoag noted that as of July 1, 2020, it had expensed only \$13,097 of the \$65,000 approved budget for the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program.

¹ Pascoag Utility District 2020 Demand Side Management Request to Adjust a Program in the 2020 Budget at 1 (July 1, 2020)

It hopes to spur activity by further reducing customers' upfront costs with the rebates offered in the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentive program.²

Pascoag has relied on community events to promote its energy efficiency programs. However, since it will not be participating in any community events and will not attend any in person training through the end of the year, it would like to reallocate funds from these two programs to the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program should those funds be depleted.³

On July 2, 2020, Nicholas Ucci, Commissioner of the Office of Energy Resources (OER) filed a letter with the Commission supporting Pascoag's request. Mr. Ucci expressed that Pascoag's proposal is an appropriate response to the effects of the pandemic and that by assisting customers reduce upfront costs that can create a barrier for customers, Pascoag will be able to further its energy efficiency programs as the economy recovers.⁴ The Division of Public Utilities and Carriers filed a memorandum in support of Pascoag's proposal on August 6, 2020. It noted that it was aware that Pascoag's ability to deliver energy efficiency measures was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It found Pascoag's adjustments to the Home Energy Audits and Weatherization Incentives program to be reasonable.⁵

At an Open Meeting on September 29, 2020, the Commission approved Pascoag's request to increase the rebate percentage for weatherization and air sealing from 75% to 100% and the rebate caps for insulation and air sealing to a combined total of \$3,000 per customer. The Commission noted that OER funded the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives

² *Id.* at 2.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Ucci Letter (Jul. 2, 2020).

⁵ Div. Mem. (Aug. 6, 2020).

program with RGGI funds and that OER had recommended approval of the request to increase the rebate percentage and caps. The Commission hopes that the greater rebate amounts will allow more individuals, especially those that are unemployed, the opportunity to engage in efficiency measures that will lower their energy costs going forward.

The Commission declined to approve Pascoag's request to reallocate \$8,765 from the Community Events program and \$2,500 from the Energy Efficiency Management Continuing Education Program to the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program finding that it was not ripe for decision. It reasoned that Pascoag currently has approximately \$52,000 remaining in the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program that will likely not be depleted prior to the end of the year.

Accordingly, it is hereby

(23921) ORDERED:

1. Pascoag Utility District's request to increase the weatherization and air sealing rebate percentage from 75% to 100% and to increase the rebate caps for weatherization and air sealing to a combined total of \$3,000 per customer in its Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program is approved.
2. Pascoag Utility District's request to reallocate \$8,765 from the Community Events program and \$2,500 from the Energy Efficiency Management Continuing Education Program to the Home Energy Audits with Weatherization Incentives program is denied.

EFFECTIVE AT WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2020 PURSUANT TO AN OPEN MEETING DECISION ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2020. WRITTEN ORDER ISSUED OCTOBER 8, 2020.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION



Ronald T. Gerwatowski, Chairperson



Marion S. Gold, Commissioner



Abigail Anthony, Commissioner

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL: Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-5-1, any person aggrieved by a decision or order of the PUC may, within seven days from the date of the order, petition the Supreme Court for a Writ of Certiorari to review the legality and reasonableness of the decision or order.